



Father Antonio Peralta of the Santa Teresita Church authors a book in Papiamentu

On Friday morning of this week, parishioners of the Santa Teresita Church in San Nicolas joined Father Antonio Peralta in “baptizing” a book he researched and compiled devoted to the life of their patron saint. “Santa Teresita- a Saint for all times and all ages” is a colorful thirty-two page book filled with reproductions of the early photographs of the young woman that was eventually canonized by the Catholic Church as Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. Father Tony revealed he was inspired to recount her story for a number of reasons, one being the 110 anniversary of her death, and also the approach of the week of events coming up that will precede her feast day, October 1.

“Santa Teresita is a Saint of the people,” expressed Father Tony, “and I felt it was important to our parishioners and all Arubans to be able to learn about the lives of saints in their own language. Books about The Saints, in Papiamentu, are rare.”

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux was born in France in 1873 and died very young, at the age of only twenty-four. According to church scholars, “Generations of Catholics have admired this young saint, called her the “Little Flower”, and found in her short life more inspiration for their own lives than in volumes by theologians.” She died after living as a cloistered Carmelite nun for less than ten years. Despite never participating in any missions, nor founding a religious order, or being known for great works, within 28 years after her death, the public demand was so great, she was canonized. Her only writings were published after her death, which was a brief edited version of her personal journal called “Story of a Soul,” and only recently has collections of her letters and restored versions of her journals been published. Many Catholics consider her message universal and as simple and compelling as it was more than a century ago.

One of nine brothers and sisters, of which only five daughters survived, Thérèse was the child of very devout parents, a mother that wished to be a saint, and a father that wanted to be a monk. Thérèse lost her mother to breast cancer when she was only four, and herself was stricken with a serious fever at a very young age. While ill, she watched as her sisters prayed to the Virgin Mary for her recovery, and had a vision of Mary smiling at her, after which she was reportedly instantly cured. This upbringing and experience made her determined to follow her older sister as a Carmelite Nun, and even though they did not want to accept her to the novitiate at the young age of fourteen, Thérèse was determined, and joined the order.

Father Tony consulted several sources in his biography of Santa Teresita, and was assisted in the “baptism” of his book by “Madrinas” Tina Kappen and Ann Mathew, and the “Padrinos” Morris Emerencia and Kenneth Carti. The book costs 7.50 Aruban florins (\$4.30) and is available at the Blue Army Center, Santa Teresita Church bookshop, the UNOCA office, Centro Pastoral Aruba, in the administrative offices of all of Aruba’s catholic churches and in all island bookstores.

Father Tony expressed that he is happy to talk with anyone interested in the sentiments of Santa Teresita, and can be contacted at telephone #746-2141. “I believe that understanding the life of this saint and studying her thoughts and reflections about The Lord will assist them in their search for peace and happiness.”